

A Guide for Students

By SeekersGuidance



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“We did not attain unto this knowledge except by way of exaltation (i.e. of the knowledge and deeming it something great)” *Imam al-Halwani*

“The most beloved actions to Allah are those performed consistently, even if they are few.”
Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him)

Dear Student,

By taking a Seekersguidance course, forming a SeekersCircle or joining us for classes at SeekersHub, you have set your foot on the path of learning the religion and striving to perfect your faith and practice.

Staying on this path requires commitment, consistency, and an understanding of the etiquette of seeking religious knowledge. What follows is an overview of the etiquette of learning, as well as a number of learning strategies to aid you in mastering the material you are learning.

The Proper Etiquette (Adab) of the Seeker by Ustadh Tabraze Azam

Our tradition is deeply rooted in **proper manners (adab)**; or the right way of doing things. For this reason, the scholars have always stressed its importance in training new generations of students in order that they may be fit to receive the Prophetic light.

Imam Zarnuji (Allah be pleased with him), the author of the excellent work *Instruction of the Student and the Method of Learning* (Ta`lim al-Muta`allim fi Tariq al-Ta`allum), writes that it is of the utmost importance that one has deep respect for the knowledge one is studying and its people.

Imam Ghazali (Allah be pleased with him) mentioned that, “We didn’t attain unto this knowledge except by way of humility”. Similarly, Imam al-Halwani (Allah be pleased with him), a great Hanafi, is reported to have said, “We didn’t attain unto this knowledge except by way of exaltation (i.e. of the knowledge and deeming it something great); for I have not touched a single piece of paper except in a state of ritual ablution (wudu)”.

Furthermore, Ibn Jama`ah (Allah be pleased with him) noted in his work, *Memoir of the Listener and the Speaker in the Training of Teacher and Student* (Tadhkirat al-Sami` wa'l Mutakallim fi Adab al-'Alim wa'l Muta`allim), that one should appear before one’s teacher in a state of purity, of clothing and body. One should be focused in one’s state, not tired, hungry, or otherwise. This is in order that one can fully benefit from the teacher and his instruction.

When one realizes the greatness of that which is being sought, those it is being sought from and that one is seeking to attain a portion of the Prophetic inheritance, one humbles oneself, is in awe of knowledge and its people and gives one’s all.

The etiquettes (adab) to follow are many. The more one adheres to them, the greater the benefit one attains. “Act upon that which one knows, and Allah will grant one knowledge of that which one knows not.”

The Five Inward Manners of Seeking Knowledge

1. Intention

- Have a high intention of why you are seeking knowledge. Is it to seek the pleasure of Allah (may He be exalted), or are you seeking knowledge to show off?

2. Clear & Defined Goals

- Have a clear sense of what you are seeking, and define what your goals are for seeking knowledge. What are you trying to achieve? How are you going to go about seeking knowledge? Do you want to be able to teach others?

3. Veneration

- Have a deep respect for scholars, writings of scholars, books , and for knowledge itself. Scholars are inheritors of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace).
- Maintain a state of ablution (wudu) when studying.

4. Adab (Manners)

- Have proper adab (manners) - you can only have adab if you learn about it

5. Consistency

- Learn something every day and review every day. Our lives are busy, but at the same time we should set aside some time every day to learn. Establish a routine for study.
- Seeking knowledge should become intrinsic for the true seeker

The Five Outward Manners of Seeking Knowledge

1. Repeat and Review

- Commenting on this advice, Shaykh Faraz Rabbani tells us that by repetition, even donkeys learn so there is no reason why we humans cannot learn through repetition.
- Review:
 - Key Concepts, conditions, and integrals because if you understand these clearly, you understand what you are studying.
 - Definitions (e.g. What is *ghusl*? What is *wudu*? What is wiping?)
 - [Shaykh Adib Kallas](#) (rahimahullah) said that matters are known by their definitions.
 - So, it is of utmost importance that one learns the definitions of what is being studying.
 - Definitions bring out the meanings of things

2. Take Notes

- Take notes while listening, but also make your own notes on readings that are prescribed or supplemental material described in the lecture
- Have pen and paper to jot down the most important things described or items to be researched at a later time
 - Diagram what you are studying because diagramming helps to visualize concepts
 - Diagramming helps you actively engage in what you are learning.
- A seeker of knowledge is called a seeker because they are an active participant in learning. The term “seeker” means that you are the one who is searching and acquiring knowledge. You are not being sought for knowledge.
 - Example: Seekers ask “What else can and should we be reading?” when studying a topic with a teacher.

3. Ask

- The Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, “**The cure for confusion is but to ask**”.
- We shouldn’t be scared to ask questions from our teachers because if we don’t ask, it may lead to confusion and misunderstanding. Questions should, however, be asked with the proper etiquette and manners.
- Asking is half of knowledge
 - Part of why it is half of knowledge is to know how to ask a question, and the right way of asking questions
 - Ask also to confirm what you do understand because Ilm is decisive knowledge so it is imperative to make sure your understanding is correct.

4. Extra Readings

- You must do extra readings in a guided way, not randomly.
- The strong student of knowledge is one who learns the core of their knowledge through teachers but at the same time they continue reading to gain breadth of knowledge.
- You can potentially read many things, but you would be foolish to read books above your current level of understanding. So, **ask** what is appropriate
- Anytime you are studying one book, try to read a similar book on the same level
 - This will deepen your understanding of any topic
 - **Read actively**

5. Prepare for class

- The best way to prepare for a class is to prepare so much that you know the subject better than the teacher
- It is important to prepare for class, just as you prepare to go to school or work.
- It is best to read **and** understand the text of the section being discussed, however, if nothing else, read over the text of the section.
 - When reading, you may encounter questions which you can then ask when given the opportunity
 - Many teachers say that one should prepare for five hours for each one hour of class, however, others have recommended less time for preparation.

Five Strategies for Successful Online Learning

1. Plan

- Set aside **regular work time** during the week. Online classes are not easier than face-to-face classes; they require just as much actual studying time.
- **Plan ahead** so you can attend the live sessions.
- If possible, make sure you have a **private space** where you can study.
- Have at least one **back-up** in place should your computer or Internet connection fail. If a friend or family member's computer isn't available, use your local library.

2. Motivate Yourself

- Online classes take a tremendous amount of self-motivation. Remember why you are taking this course -- to seek the pleasure of Allah. Be as strict with your time as you would were you signed up for a face-to-face class.

3. Participate

- Take part in the **online forums**. Attend the **live sessions** with questions prepared.
- **Speak out** if you run into any questions. In the online class, the body-language and other non-verbal cues instructors and classmates might pick up on when you are struggling are absent. If you have a question, ask.

4. Maintain adab

- It can be easy to let our adab slip when we aren't actually sitting in front of our teacher.
- Be **thoughtful** when preparing your written questions and responses.
- Be aware of how the written word can be **misread** or **misinterpreted**. Always re-read what you post before others see it. Being overly "concise" can be misread as abruptness. Writing in all caps is typically interpreted as shouting. For more, see the **Netiquette Home Page** in Recommended Readings, below.
- Always be your **best self** in your online classes.

5. Take your online learning seriously.

- When life gets busy, it's easy to let an online class slip down your priority list. Take the online class just as **seriously** as any face-to-face class you might take.
- Again, remember why you are seeking sacred knowledge. Make your initial intention a high one, renew your intention throughout, and stay committed.

Final Advice

- Students should **listen** to the lessons at least once, while taking **notes**. These notes may then be studied as often as necessary.
- Students may listen to the audio repeatedly, while commuting or while doing other rote work, and with repetition the student will gain mastery of the material covered.
- Students are encouraged to **ask** questions as they arise, while listening to the audio
- Assignments and review questions which are given should be honestly attempted and completed within reasonable time
- Students should pace themselves so that they are listening to a regular amount of course material daily or weekly (according to their own preference). It is to the students' advantage to follow any recommended lesson completion dates.

Some Recommended Readings & videos

- [1] [Instruction of the Student: The Method of Learning](#)
- [2] [Memoir of the Listener and the Speaker in the Training of Teacher and Student](#)
- [3] [Imam Ghazali's Book of Knowledge](#)
- [4] [The Book of Knowledge from The Gardens of the Righteous \(Riyad al-Salihin\)](#)
- [5] [The Path of Muhammad: A Book on Islamic Morals and Ethics](#)
- [6] [Ten Adab of Seekers of Knowledge - Notes by Ayaz Siddiqui](#)
- [7] [How to Take Notes like Thomas Edison](#)
- [8] [How to Take Lecture Notes](#)
- [9] [Geek to Live: Take study-worthy lecture notes](#)
- [10] [Netiquette Home Page](#)

Videos & audio

- [1] [Habib Umar's advice to Students of Knowledge](#)
- [2] [The Etiquette of Seeking Knowledge](#)
- [3] [The Virtues of Seeking Knowledge](#)
- [4] [The Way of Seekers](#)

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